

7. Biosafety Guidelines in the Philippines and Their Implementation

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In the Philippines, Executive Order No. 430 of October 15, 1990, signed by then President Corazon Aquino created the National Committee on Biosafety in the Philippines (NCBP). This body formulates policies on biotechnology and oversees compliance to biosafety policies. It formulated and adopted the Philippines Biosafety Guidelines in 1991. The poster presented the organizational structure of the NCBP, the National Biosafety Policies and Guidelines, and the mechanism of implementation. The guidelines today, however, have been undergoing review and revisions.

There are five major biosafety policies. One, states that the Philippines shall not engage in any activity related to chemical and biological warfare. Two, that the guidelines apply to all activities and institutions in the country engaged in genetic engineering. Three, that any work covered by the guidelines must be approved by the NCBP before its implementation. Four, that the primary responsibility of enforcing the rules and regulations on biosafety rests on the institutions involved and their scientists. And fifth, that the monitoring of work is a responsibility of the institution.

The Biosafety Guidelines cover work on genetic engineering and activities requiring the importation, introduction, field release and breeding of organisms that are potentially harmful to people and the environment. The guidelines make provisions for the composition, qualifications and appointment of authorities composing the implementing bodies such as the NCBP, the Institute Biosafety Committees (IBC) and the Biosafety officer. Guidelines are provided for evaluating the work covered, contains regulations pertaining to the introduction, movement and field release of potentially hazardous biological materials and describe physical and biological containment and safety procedures in the work being conducted by the concerned institutions.

Since its approval, the NCBP has been organized with the Undersecretary of the Department of Science and Technology as chairman and its office serves as the Secretariat. Institutional Biosafety Committees have been organized at major research centers, with the University of the Philippines as focal point at Los Baños, Diliman and Manila. Each research institution in the research center has appointed a Biosafety officer.

The Philippine Biosafety Guidelines, have been developed after similar guidelines formulated in advanced countries in the late 1980s. Since then, these countries have revised and fine-tuned their guidelines based on new information. The Philippines is also currently attempting to revise its Biosafety Guidelines especially the regulations pertaining to the introduction, movement and field release of potentially hazardous biological materials.

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